

Theses on the Inversion of the Cinema

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Millennium Film Journal, Fall-Winter, 1983-84

(Through certain extrapolations, it may be posited that a world external to that of the cinema actually exists. These extrapolations, hypothetical as they are, form the basis of the theory of the subject external to the everyday phenomena of the screen. This theory is the theory of the life-world, characterized by the *continuity of character*, something only hinted at in cinema.)

1

Events in cinema - the discursive unfolding of internal or psychological temporality - occur only within the rearticulation of the geometry of the film reel. This unfolding is entirely non-linear, since any event may produce its reaction, be repeated, or occur within flashback or flashforward diegesis. This unfolding is therefore a *compression* or nodal point which expands cleanly (see below) into an articulation of a language it establishes.

In contrast, consider the expansion of any sequence until it fills the diegesis - a sequence in which no articulation of temporality is possible, in which memory alone serves the subject, in which we can no longer speak of "the deployment of the world," but instead, of the world as a bind or fetish which plays itself against itself. We consider this alien notion of temporality internal, and can conceive of its appearance as expansion or contraction within the subject. Thus the primary operations of displacement and condensation within the cinematic world are replaced by a *continuous unfolding* in which even such basic processes as the double exposure are impossible.

2

In addition, we postulate the presence of a space which spills (away), which is unbound - a space external to any articulating framework, a space in which the subject is lost, and, to recover that lack, must move in a flow of identifications (with the maternal breast) which return the subject, through a faulty mirror, to stasis and alienation. In this hypothetical world, the subject is denied repetition, but only allowed to repeat.

3

The subject in the life-world is denied panopticality and the appearance of his/her own response to the other. Again, this is replaced by the necessity of continuous movement.

4

Furthermore, and this is noted from investigations into the forgotten areas of the filmic image, the life-world is characterized by spill, clutter, the trivia of other subjects which tend to deconstruct any narrative trajectories. This spill is the subject of momentary fetishization revealing this paradox - that our compressed, stabilized, and non-linear cinematic temporality is inverted by a life-world decompressed by linear temporality. The economic of the life-world itself is an internalization; the economic of cinematic reality is in the constructed manipulation of drives and projections.

5

We postulate that the mechanisms of the inscription of character in cinema (which are formal, signifying, and *clignotement*) fall away in the world of the subject, to be replaced by inscriptions from an internal impulse (ego, libido) which flicker, coagulate - which form what we may call temporary institutions or associations. These reflect on the transformation of character which cannot be withdrawn. Semen, cement.

6

Cinema cannot exist without the world of the subject; the world of the subject cannot exist without the cinema. The historic cinema (Edison, et. al.) is only a materialization, extruded through technological development, light-sensitive surfaces on a malleable base. Thus the theory of cinematic reality and the theory of the subject provide a double articulation, double technology. Both are circumlocuted - the cinema, through the totalization of the apparatus (in the large) and the script (in the small), and the subject, through the speaking and doubling of the "I" and the internalization of ideological institutions. In the latter, however, we postulate that the signifiers *chatter* through the presence of spill and clutter in late capitalism, while in the ordinary world of cinema (and its power) the constructivism guarantees a totalizing manipulation.

7

This totalizing manipulation results in a freezing of inscriptions; specific cinematic realities coexist and continue, albeit under slow transformation through the presence of decay in the world of the subject. For him or for her, inscriptions exhaust themselves. The scopophilic fetishization of a filmed man or woman articulates and rearticulates without loss; for the spectator, however, temporal entrapment alters the imaginary (at a faster rate than the process of decay, we assume) until the image is abandoned.

8

Our cinematic reality, as this speech act itself indicates, is therefore a totalization of codes; the reality of the subject, bounded as it is by spill, is an appropriation of asignifications, an appropriations producing withdrawal in dialectic with a commodity process that fuels temporary demarcations. Thus the world of the subject is a world of *seizures*; it attempts, but fails, at cinema.

9

From the position of the discrete within the cinematic world, we postulate the analogical; from the position of the operations of condensation/displacement/substitution, we postulate exchange/memory/recall; from the articulating function of the screen (spatial boundary, temporal compression), we postulate an internalization ("ego") (spatial expansion, temporal linearity); from the screen introjection of the world of the subject, we postulate the "ego" introjection of the cinema and institutionalization. We desire the other. The world of the subject is deployed towards the cinematic; the cinematic becomes a node from which the subject spills.

10

Characters within the cinematic world are undercoded (indeterminate in history, behavior, psychology, except in their prostitution) and overcoded (overdetermined within the world of the subject). The undercoding is grounded in the overcoding which exists on the level of formal play and methodologies. Now finally cinema has triumphed in this in the world of the subject, in which postulated internalizations (see #9) are replaced by the introjection of an apparatus for the manipulation of character traits. This apparatus places

internality on the level of exchange; the “ego” becomes simply a moment of impulse, a thrust of a socialized dagger.

11

Within the world of cinema, even we must notice an anomaly – the appearance of bracketing in the geometry of the film, bracketing in the form of titles, end credits, leaders, tails, guaranteeing the stasis of the cinematic interplay. Thus the aura of the totalization is guaranteed by these signifiers of an *other* world than that of the spectator; things are this, and not that. The compression becomes complete, conclusive. (These credits are moments of ejaculation within the darkness solicited by the viewer.) Without such devices, the viewer becomes uneasy; cinema becomes spill; it may continue when the lights are on.

12

The cinema world is the intermittent reconstitution of the vacuum, its rearticulation, its repression. Darkness with no external trace, a grid vacuum (extending epistemologically into the granularity of the individual image, its dissolution). This is paralleled by the micro-deconstruction of the world of the subject (and therefore the materiality of the world of the cinema), in which space-time appears as a multiply-connected topology on the subatomic level (“the foam-like nature of the universe”), the physical vacuum itself possesses virtual particle fluctuations, and particles may possess no continuous non-instrumental existence. The cinematic world appears and exhausts itself on a repetitive (industrial) basis, a portrayal in a specific space (screen space) of the real. Thus the vacuum articulates the world of the cinema, providing an armature; the physical world of the subject, however, dissolves into the chaos of non-identity. The vacuum as cinematic bind is inverted by the autonomic gestures of the subject in the life-world - continuity in the midst of spill requiring no further attention.

13

Just as the real is *that object* for the cinema, cinema is *that object* for the real: cinema, real, and no other. Cinema exists as a bracket, a remove; elsewhere, the world suffocates. The cinema permits scopophilic participation, revelation of secrets, motivations – a closed universe of discourse (i.e., there are no secrets in the diegetic, no contents in the vacuum, which are not offered libidinally to the subject). The cinema annihilates clutter as neurosis articulates it through repetition and reification of spill - nail-biting, head-scratching. Cinema and the classic obsessive-compulsive neurosis are processes of working-through in which surplus labor is subverted and eliminated for the subject. (Both are gifts.) That is: a *completion* within the structure of late capitalism (world of the subject) that inverts the falling-away of consumption, but a *node* simultaneously which exhausts itself (as pornography) and recedes (as the unfolding reveals its barriers, titling).

14

Thus the cinema is that process which construes the position of the body of the subject in the real: one moves, or the other (film or spectator); one stops (film or spectator) for the other; one repeats. Between each cinematic image and its successor, the real appears in the vacuum; the real is signified by its presence in the absence of the film (revealed in the blink of the spectator, psychophysical exhaustion - situations in which the film falls away as film for a moment, becomes intermittent light, requires reconstitution, as in the pan of an amateur filmmaker). The cinematic world meshes with the darkness of the real; the real returns for the spectator as the presence of the body in the theater, the theatrical body.

15

“...to channel, to unfold, against us - superego formation located in the presence of the *cut*, ‘Now I’m going to show you something else, now you’ve got to move on’...’ You’ve had enough time, I’m twisting your head, penis, vagina, in another direction.’ ...Metz: ‘At every moment I am in the film by my look’s caress.’ The position of the theater opens the world of the subject of the film; the film caresses. The film *permits* the look; the real negates it. (On a bus, in a classroom, street: the gaze transforms into the *glance* characterized by its appearance *somewhere else*.) Watching in a film is transformed into looking in the world of the subject, the detumescent phallus, withdrawn ego. Sexuality is the bracketing, restraint, and permissiveness of the world of the cinema translated into everyday life.”

16

The flow of capital in cinema is translated into the flow of desire in the subject. Desire reconstructs the cinematic character, an investment. The cinematic economy is internally closed, open within the system of distribution. The world of the cinema is embedded in social institutions; the world of the subject is embedded in the institutionalization of the cinema.

17

Like the pineal gland of Descartes, existing as the interstice between mind and body, the camera exists between the cinematic and the real, editorializes the latter. A camera moves continuously from one to another space (and all spaces are one space except within the world of the subject); it appropriates by a cut into that space and its elimination. Thus a camera, like the frame rate (16, 18, 24, 25 frames per second) becomes an arbitrary technology based on human psychophysiology and kinesics, but granted a transcendental role within the apparatus of the cinema/late capitalism. The cinematic world does not postulate a camera, which is extruded from the real as neurotic self-reflexivity confining the spectator to silence within an autocratic system. The camera (except in situations of large-scale camera obscura) is always elsewhere - not in the cinema, not in the real. (The cinema digests the apparatus; the real expels it.)

18

The presence of the (jump) cut is the dissolution of the world. The cinematic world dissolves its character for a reconstitution (parallel imagery) elsewhere in the reel; the insistent world of the subject continues everything past the cinematic cut, carries the diegesis forward in mnemonic suffocation, collapse. For the subject, everything unfolds and everything is present.

19

From the world of the cinema to the world of the subject and return, we can only postulate a film, of indefinite length, in which a hand-held camera moves through a continuous space, unthinkingly, insistent upon the temporality of projection, or another exercise which collapses again to a node, vertex, point of origin, a series of images in a linear and spiralling order, in a case, or series of cases, deteriorating quickly, or preserved, occasionally unwound, wound, unwound, and wound, moving from illumination to illumination, most of their life in the darkness of the real. [Just as this essay is, in fact, the script of a film, formulating itself, cross-referencing, scanning and return back and forth but after a new thing and a different thing, and a different returning and a new returning until exhaustion and comprehension, at least appearance and the darkness seeps through.